

## Contributed

### SOUTHERN STUDENT CONFERENCE OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS.

Rev. Henry H. Sweets, Secretary of Ministerial Education.

One of the most remarkable movements in the history of the Christian Church, is the uprising of Christian students for the bringing in of the Kingdom. This movement is remarkable not only for the large number of men enlisted, but for the great latent power embodied in its membership. It is also remarkable for its thoroughness of work and careful methods of training.

Probably no other factor has had such a prominent place in training college men for Christian work as the summer and winter conferences. The first of these conferences was established at Northfield, Mass., just twenty years ago. There two hundred and fifty-one men gathered at the invitation of Mr. Moody, to study the Bible, to study the problems of missions, and discuss methods and plans for Christian work in the colleges. Since that time the number of conferences for college men has grown to eight, with more than two thousand and five hundred of the choicest students from the colleges attending each year. These two thousand, five hundred men are given ten days of careful training and are inspired to go back into their colleges to lead other men to know a richer and fuller moral and Christian life.

The problems of these conferences have become very comprehensive. An hour each day is given to Bible study, under the leadership of capable Bible students. An hour is set aside for the study of missions. During one hour of the day the conference is divided into a number of groups, one group studying the problems of the Christian ministry, the call, the qualifications, the need; another group gives itself to the study of the need and preparation for missionary candidates; still another group studies the problems of the city, the church, the churchless multitudes, and the City Young Men's Christian Association. One hour each day is given over to a discussion of methods, and two hours each day to inspirational addresses.

These Conferences have marked an epoch in the lives of thousands of college men. It is here that many a college man has more clearly learned the value of the Bible in the building of his character. It is here that the vision of what can be done in Christian work for students is brought before men; and here also hundreds of college men have dedicated their lives to the service of God, in the Christian ministry, in the mission field, in the work of the Young Men's Christian Association.

So prominent and helpful have these Conferences become that many Christian students are beginning to feel that their college education is not complete until they have attended one or more of these gatherings.

At the present time there are two of these Conferences held in the south, one at Asheville, N. C., during the summer, and one at Ruston, La., during the

Christmas vacation. The Southern Conference meets this summer at Montreat, N. C. (fifteen miles from Asheville in the very heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, at an altitude of 2,300 feet).

The speakers and leaders are more numerous and probably stronger than at any previous session. Such men as Dr. Edward I. Bosworth, of Oberlin College, one of the most noted Bible scholars in America; Dr. S. M. Zwemer, the greatest authority in America on Mohammedan world; Dr. O. E. Brown and Dr. J. H. Stevenson, of Vanderbilt University; Dr. W. H. Marquess, of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville; Dr. J. Watt Raine, of Berea, Ky; Dr. George Fisher, John F. Moore and F. P. Turner, all of New York, and many others, make one certain that this will be a most notable gathering.

Louisville, Ky.

### CONCERNING THE ASSEMBLY'S QUESTION.

By T. S. Knox.

The Assembly sends this question to the Presbyteries: "Shall any change be made in Confession of Faith, Chap. 10, Sec. 3?"

On the question of the Elect Infant Clause there are practically but three different views. First, there are those who favor no change in the wording or the meaning of the clause. Second, there are those who would change the wording if the meaning would not be altered—that is, if language could be found to express the same thought, but give less occasion for misconstruction. Then, in the third place, there are those who want to change the wording in order to change the meaning. In fact they want to get the doctrine of election out of the way. They want to make Calvinism palatable to all the critics of Calvinism. Judged by the history of our Church and the past decisions of the Assembly, there are but few of this class—but they are extremely radical. They welcome any change that promises to weaken our standards and thus popularize our faith.

In the coming meetings of the Presbyteries it is clear how those holding the first and those holding the third opinions expressed will vote. But there may be many who favor the second opinion referred to. If so, they will doubtless hold the balance of power. It is to them that these remarks are earnestly submitted.

In the coming vote of the Presbyteries, I contend that those who hold to the meaning of the clause as it is, but would welcome a better wording if it could be found, can at the present time most safely and consistently vote with the negative. The following reasons are given for this statement:

In the first place, your vote in the affirmative would be misunderstood. When all the votes are counted there will be but two classes—those "for" or "against" a change. Your change might not impair the present meaning of the clause. But if you express at this time your desired change—and the affirmative carries—your vote, as counted, would give weight to any radical change that might be suggested. You would rather have the clause as it is than to surrender

its meaning, yet your vote would be counted with those who want to repudiate the doctrine itself. For instance, you might favor so slight a change as to merely have the words "infants dying in infancy" written in italics—which would place the stress in the reading as follows:

"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth." This would clearly put the emphasis on infants who die in infancy as opposed to those who live to maturity. The italics might more clearly show that the contrast was between elect infants dying in infancy and those living to reach maturity—and not any contrast between the elect infant as such and any implied non-elect infants. This slight change in the type that would not impair the integrity of the clause might possibly relieve it of some misconstruction. But if you should vote in the affirmative with even such restriction, the restriction would not stand in the counting of the vote. Your vote would go with those who might favor any radical change whatever, and you would thus strengthen a cause with which you have no sympathy.

Then the method suggested is irregular and extremely radical. It does violence to the Presbyterian standards. Though coming from the Assembly it practically violates the spirit of the constitution. The Book of Church Order makes ample provision for any desired changes. If there is any dissatisfaction the right of such expression through the method of overture to the Assembly is clearly granted. It is a privilege given any individual or group of individuals, any Session, Presbytery, or Synod. What need was there then for the Assembly to send down such a question to the Presbyteries? Were "three overtures" for changes enough to alarm the Assembly? Could it not, like a wise physician, have waited for other patients to arrive when it had already set its office hours and opened wide its doors? When we remember that there are more than eighty Presbyteries and over twenty-five thousand members of our Church, the fact that three "patients" were clamoring for a change would hardly justify the Assembly in concluding that the malady was dangerously contagious. On the other hand, if the Assembly had decided that the question of a change was to be even indirectly considered, its course was clear. The Assembly is the highest court of the Church. Its functions are clearly defined as "receiving and issuing appeals"—"bearing testimony against error in doctrine"—"deciding in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline"—"advising and instructing in conformity with the constitution in all cases submitted to it"—"in general to recommend measures," etc. Book of Church Order, Sec. 6, Par. 90. The book makes the Assembly the arbiter of all controversy—the defender of the faith and the final authority of the Church on earth. In solemn council it "bears testimony to the truth—advises—decides and recommends." Its constitution can be changed "only upon the recommendation of one General Assembly, the concurrence of at least three-fourths of the Presbyteries, and the en-